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Gaelic Mind and the Collapse of the Gaelic World (Studies in Irish history)

Andrew Gailey

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Excerpt from the preface: Their unique social, political and cultural position lends the work of the bardic poets an authority which is overlooked only at the cost of reducing further the already scant source material for the study of Gaelic Ireland during the expansion of Tudor and Stuart power in the 16th and 17th centuries. Bardic poetry adds a dimension to our understanding of the contemporary learned and aristocratic mind. This book is concerned with the uses of Gaelic literature as historical source material. It attempts to offers a new approach to possible interpretations of the intrigueing corpus of Irish bardic poetry for historians. In it I examine the characteristics of the literary motifs and conceits of Gaeli syllabic poetry from the 13th to the 17th centuries. I consider the body of poetry as literary artefact and, because of its position as 'official' poetry, as an organ of the political elites. By examining the potry under both species I arrive at a framwork of reference appropriate to the material which makes it useful as a cypher for aspects of the mentalite of the Gaelic elites.

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